SUPERMAN
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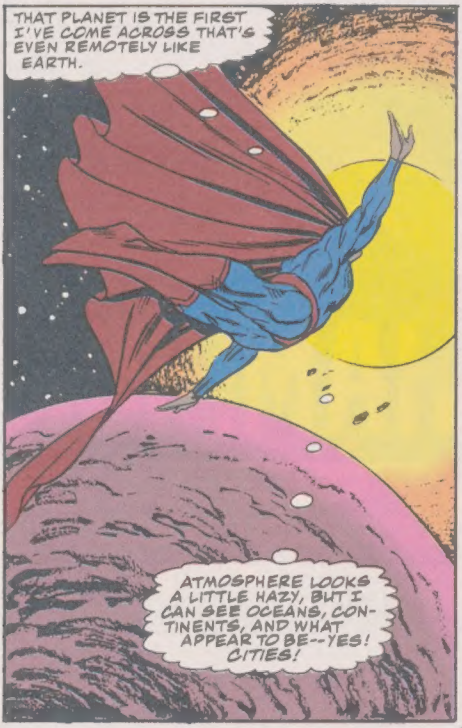
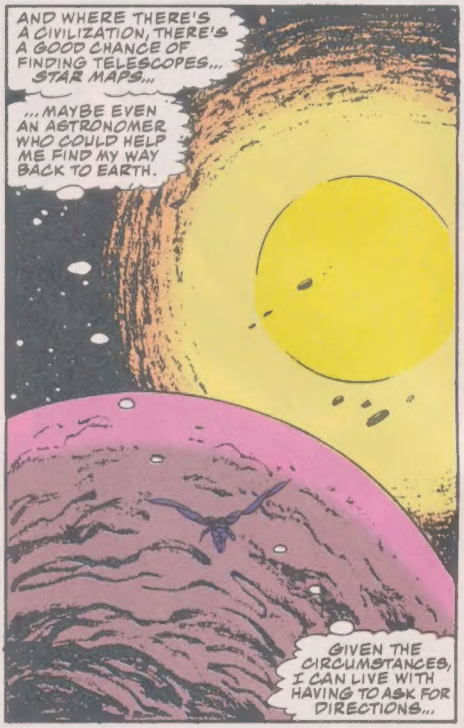
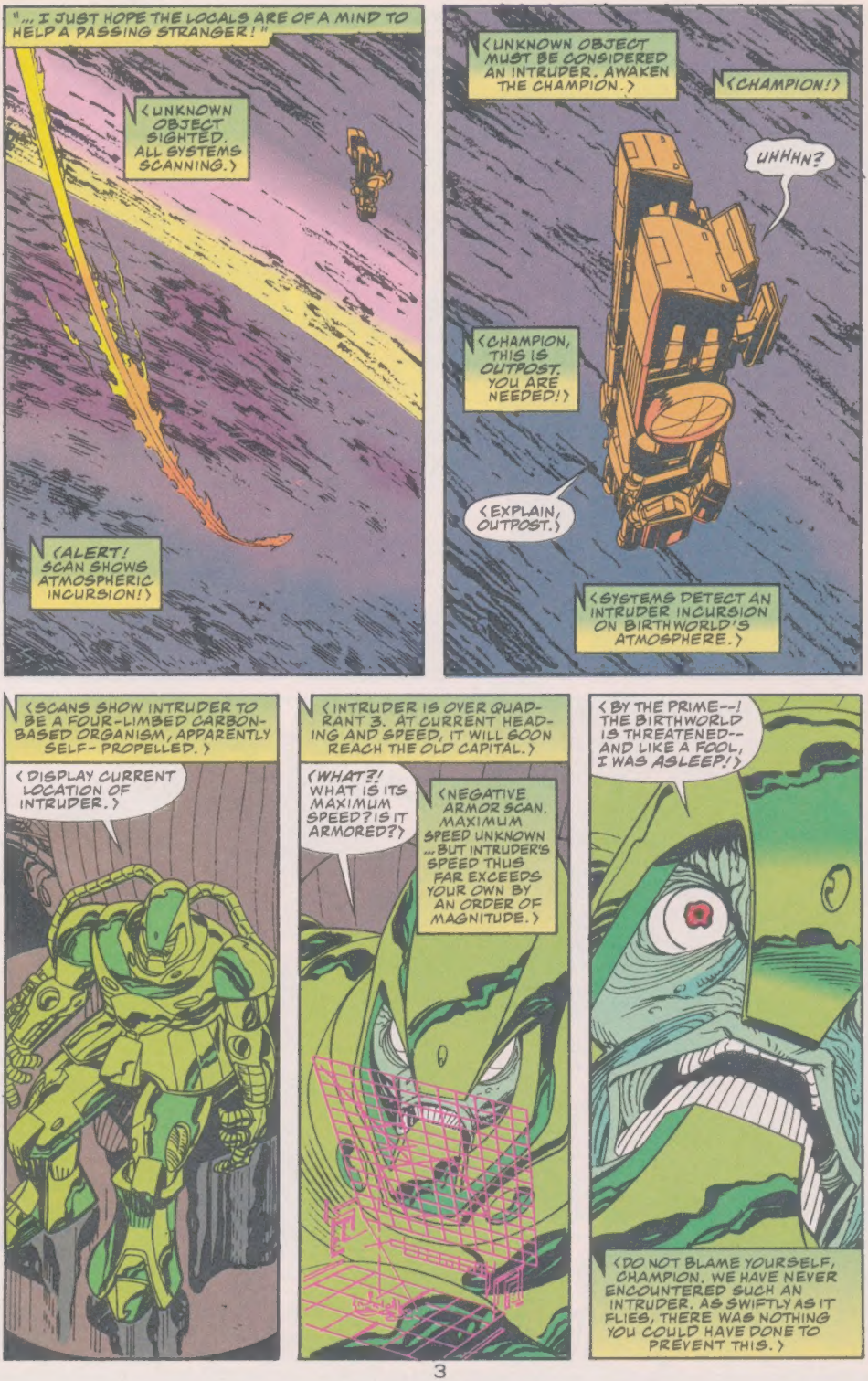
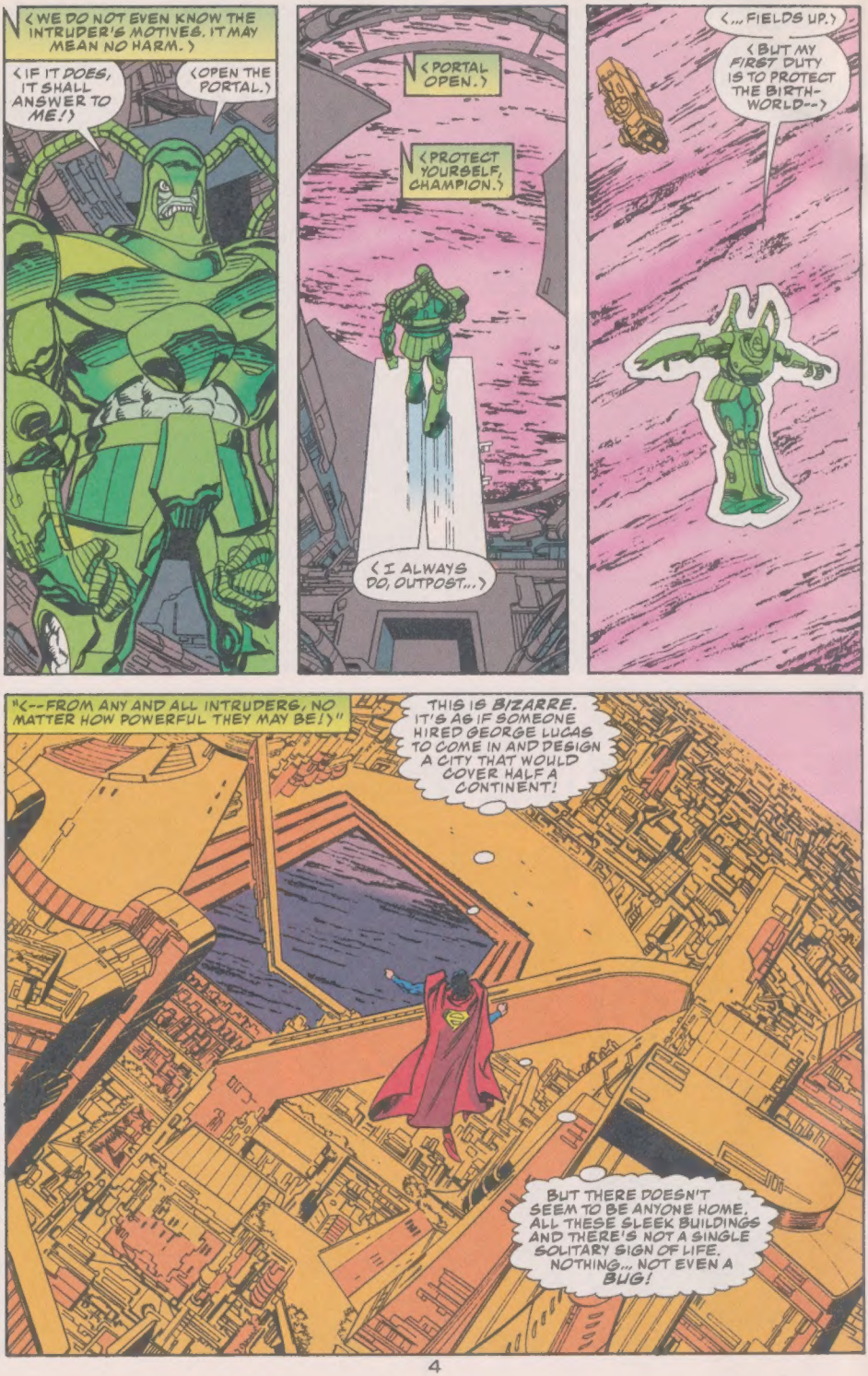
MY BODY'S BEEN ABSORBING SOLAR RADIATION ALL MY LIFE... BUT I NEVER IMAGINED THAT I COULD SOAK UP ENOUGH ENERGY TO SURVIVE WITHOUT OXYGEN.
IF I DON'T NEED OXYGEN ANYMORE, HOW ELSE AM I CHANGING?
I HAVE FELT STRONGER LATELY... NOT THAT IT'S DONE ME MUCH GOOD.
I STILL WASN'T FAST ENOUGH TO STOP THAT AGED SUN DEVIL FROM KILLING HIMSELF*... OR TO SAVE POOR ALIRON.**
* SUPERMAN #85.
** ADVENTURES #509.

AT LEAST I WAS ABLE TO DRIVE THAT ALIEN MANIAC LOBO OFF THE EARTH.*
YEAH... A GREAT LITTLE VICTORY THAT WAS! IT LEFT ME LOST OUT HERE IN THE VOID.
NONE OF THESE STARS LOOK FAMILIAR. I DON'T KNOW HOW I'LL EVER GET HOME TO... HELLO!
* MAN OF STEEL #30.


THAT PLANET IS THE FIRST I'VE COME ACROSS THAT'S EVEN REMOTELY LIKE EARTH.
ATMOSPHERE LOOKS A LITTLE HAZY, BUT I CAN SEE OCEANS, CONTINENTS, AND WHAT APPEAR TO BE--YES! CITIES!


AND WHERE THERE'S A CIVILIZATION, THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE OF FINDING TELESCOPES... STAR MAPS...
...MAYBE EVEN AN ASTRONOMER WHO COULD HELP ME FIND MY WAY BACK TO EARTH.
GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I CAN LIVE WITH HAVING TO ASK FOR DIRECTIONS...


"... I JUST HOPE THE LOCALS ARE OF A MIND TO HELP A PASSING STRANGER!"
〈UNKNOWN OBJECT SIGHTED. ALL SYSTEMS SCANNING.〉
〈ALERT! SCAN SHOWS ATMOSPHERIC INCURSION!〉
〈UNKNOWN OBJECT MUST BE CONSIDERED AN INTRUDER. AWAKEN THE CHAMPION.〉
〈CHAMPION!〉
UHHHN?
〈CHAMPION, THIS IS OUTPOST. YOU ARE NEEDED!〉
〈EXPLAIN, OUTPOST.〉
〈SYSTEMS DETECT AN INTRUDER INCURSION ON BIRTHWORLD'S ATMOSPHERE.〉
〈SCANS SHOW INTRUDER TO BE A FOUR-LIMBED CARBON-BASED ORGANISM, APPARENTLY SELF-PROPELLED.〉
〈DISPLAY CURRENT LOCATION OF INTRUDER.〉
〈INTRUDER IS OVER QUADRANT 3. AT CURRENT HEADING AND SPEED, IT WILL SOON REACH THE OLD CAPITAL.〉
〈WHAT?! WHAT IS ITS MAXIMUM SPEED? IS IT ARMORED?〉
〈NEGATIVE ARMOR SCAN. MAXIMUM SPEED UNKNOWN ...BUT INTRUDER'S SPEED THUS FAR EXCEEDS YOUR OWN BY AN ORDER OF MAGNITUDE.〉
〈BY THE PRIME--! THE BIRTHWORLD IS THREATENED--AND LIKE A FOOL, I WAS ASLEEP!〉
〈DO NOT BLAME YOURSELF, CHAMPION. WE HAVE NEVER ENCOUNTERED SUCH AN INTRUDER. AS SWIFTLY AS IT FLIES, THERE WAS NOTHING YOU COULD HAVE DONE TO PREVENT THIS.〉


〈WE DO NOT EVEN KNOW THE INTRUDER'S MOTIVES. IT MAY MEAN NO HARM.〉
〈IF IT DOES, IT SHALL ANSWER TO ME!〉
〈OPEN THE PORTAL.〉
〈PORTAL OPEN.〉
〈PROTECT YOURSELF, CHAMPION.〉
〈I ALWAYS DO, OUTPOST...〉
〈...FIELDS UP.〉
〈BUT MY FIRST DUTY IS TO PROTECT THE BIRTH-WORLD--〉
"〈--FROM ANY AND ALL INTRUDERS, NO MATTER HOW POWERFUL THEY MAY BE!〉"
THIS IS BIZARRE. IT'S AS IF SOMEONE HIRED GEORGE LUCAS TO COME IN AND DESIGN A CITY THAT WOULD COVER HALF A CONTINENT!
BUT THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ANYONE HOME. ALL THESE SLEEK BUILDINGS AND THERE'S NOT A SINGLE SOLITARY SIGN OF LIFE. NOTHING... NOT EVEN A BUG!

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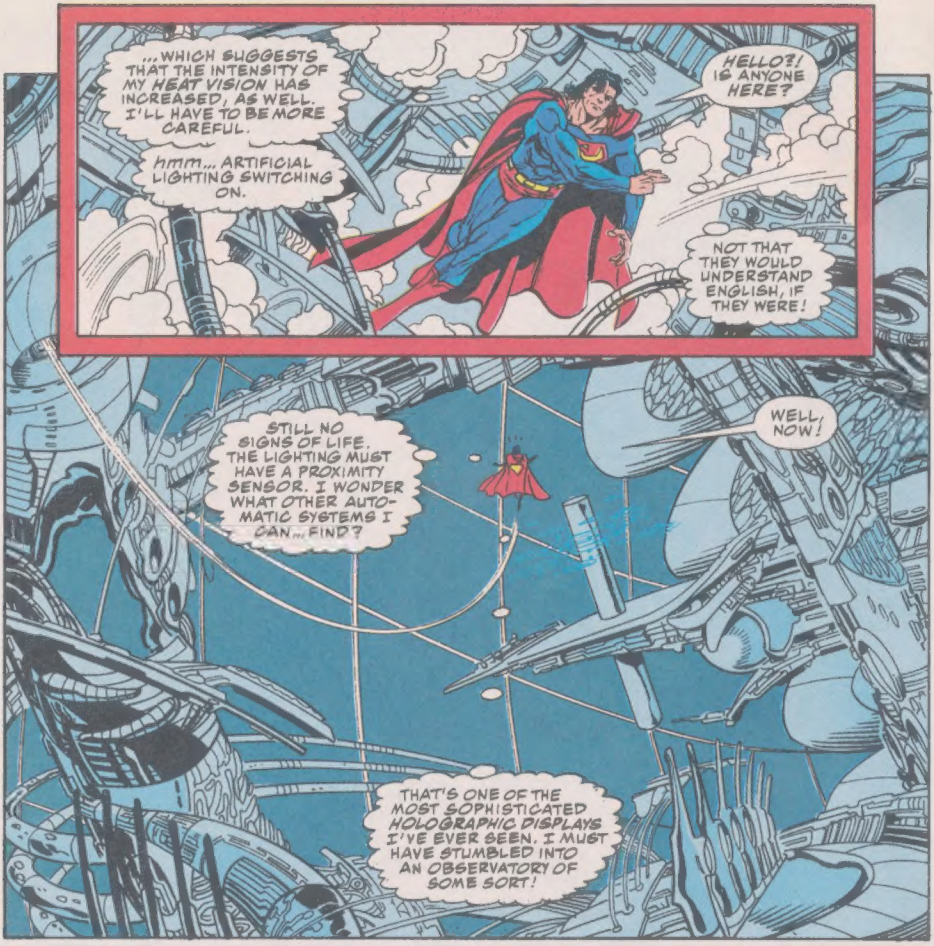
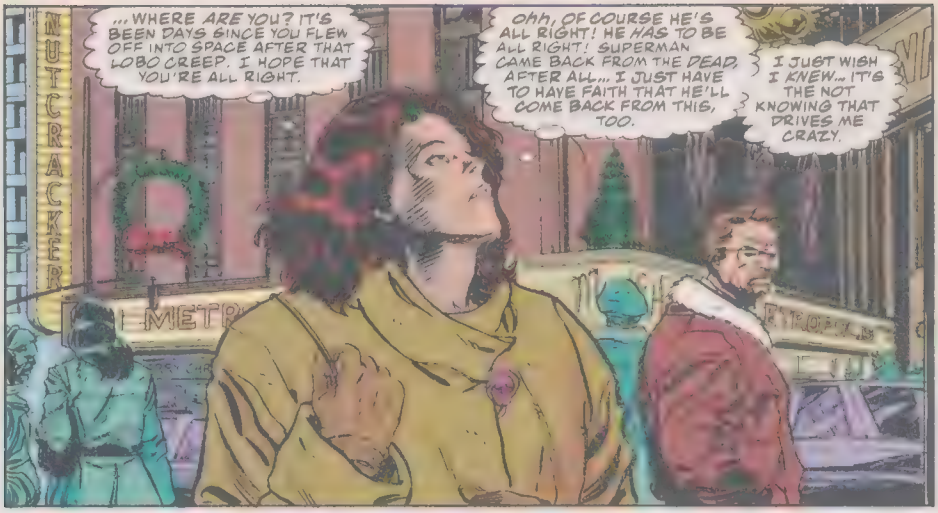
AND THE WHOLE PLACE IS COVERED WITH THAT STRANGE CLEAR GOLDEN SUBSTANCE. REMINDS ME OF A FLY SEALED IN AMBER...
...EXCEPT THAT THIS COATING LOOKS MANUFACTURED... LIKE SOME SORT OF SUPER-PLASTIC.
IT CERTAINLY FOLLOWS THE LINE OF THE BUILDINGS.
WHY WOULD ANYONE BUILD A GORGEOUS CITY LIKE THIS AND THEN SHRINK-WRAP IT?
THE AIR DOWN HERE IS NONE TOO CLEAN. BUT IF THE COATING'S MEANT FOR PROTECTION, WHERE ARE THE INHABITANTS?
WELL, MAYBE I CAN FIND SOME ANSWERS INSIDE.
I'LL JUST BURN AWAY A LITTLE OF THE "AMBER" AND--!
-?!?-
WHAT THE DEVIL?! I MEANT TO CUT A SMALL ACCESS TUNNEL THROUGH TO THIS TOWER--
--NOT BURN THE COATING OFF HALF THE BUILDING! I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT THIS STUFF WOULD BE THAT HEAT SENSITIVE...


...WHICH SUGGESTS THAT THE INTENSITY OF MY HEAT VISION HAS INCREASED, AS WELL. I'LL HAVE TO BE MORE CAREFUL.
HMM... ARTIFICIAL LIGHTING SWITCHING ON.
HELLO?! IS ANYONE HERE?
NOT THAT THEY WOULD UNDERSTAND ENGLISH, IF THEY WERE!
STILL NO SIGNS OF LIFE. THE LIGHTING MUST HAVE A PROXIMITY SENSOR. I WONDER WHAT OTHER AUTOMATIC SYSTEMS I CAN... FIND?
WELL, NOW!
THAT'S ONE OF THE MOST SOPHISTICATED HOLOGRAPHIC DISPLAYS I'VE EVER SEEN. I MUST HAVE STUMBLED INTO AN OBSERVATORY OF SOME SORT!

AMAZING...THE PROJECTION SHOWS JUST ABOUT THE ENTIRE GALAXY! THIS IS ALMOST TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE!

IF I CAN FIGURE OUT HOW TO OPERATE THE DISPLAY SYSTEMS AND LEARN WHERE I AM--

"--THEN I MAY HAVE A CHANCE OF FINDING A WAY HOME TO EARTH... AND TO LOIS!"
OH, CLARK...


NUTCRACKER
...WHERE ARE YOU? IT'S BEEN DAYS SINCE YOU FLEW OFF INTO SPACE AFTER THAT LOBO CREEP. I HOPE THAT YOU'RE ALL RIGHT.
OHH, OF COURSE HE'S ALL RIGHT! HE HAS TO BE ALL RIGHT! SUPERMAN CAME BACK FROM THE DEAD, AFTER ALL... I JUST HAVE TO HAVE FAITH THAT HE'LL COME BACK FROM THIS, TOO.
I JUST WISH I KNEW... IT'S THE NOT KNOWING THAT DRIVES ME CRAZY.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO IF I DIDN'T HAVE MY WORK TO KEEP ME OCCUPIED.
AND THERE'S PLENTY OF WORK STILL AHEAD. I'D BETTER HUSTLE... IT WOULDN'T DO TO BE LATE FOR MY AUDIENCE WITH--

--LEX LUTHOR
LOIS! DO COME IN! YOUR MESSAGE SOUNDED RATHER CRYPTIC. DON'T TELL ME YOU'VE UNCOVERED ANOTHER CASE OF INSURANCE FRAUD AT LEXCORP!
YOU'RE SO GOOD AT ROOTING OUT MIDDLE-MANAGEMENT CORRUPTION. PERHAPS I SHOULD HIRE YOU AWAY FROM THE DAILY PLANET--

--AND MAKE YOU MY TROUBLE-SHOOTER EM?
THIS GOES A LOT DEEPER THAN FRAUD, LEX

I WANT TO KNOW EVERY-THING THAT YOU CAN TELL ME ABOUT SASHA GREEN!

NOT MUCH TO TELL, LOIS. I DIDN'T KNOW MS. GREEN WELL..
"... BUT SHE WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY YOUNG WOMAN, ONE OF THE MOST ACCOMPLISHED MARTIAL ARTISTS I HAVE EVER MET."
"YOU CERTAINLY MET HER LEFT FOOT, LEX. IT WAS SASHA WHO LAID YOU OUT DURING THAT TRAINING SESSION SUPERGIRL AND I INTERRUPTED, WASN'T IT?"*
* SUPERMAN # 77.
UM, YES, LOIS. OUR LAST SESSION, AS IT TURNED OUT.
SHE DISAPPEARED THAT EVENING.
"SHE WAS LAST SEEN IN THE LOCKER ROOM BY HER FELLOW BLACK BELTS
I WISH I COULD TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENED TO HER--
--BUT I'M AFRAID I CAN'T.
WE, OF COURSE, COOPERATED FULLY WITH POLICE INVESTIGATORS...
"... BUT NOTHING WAS SEEN OR HEARD OF SASHA FOR WEEKS. THE POLICE NOW THINK THAT SHE FELL PREY TO ONE OF THOSE BLOODY ALIEN MURDERERS WHO PLAGUED THE CITY.*
* SUPERMAN ANNUAL # 5.
"ALL WE KNOW FOR
COMMISSIONER HENDERSON HIMSELF TOOK PART IN HER APPREHENSION.
"I PUT LEXCORP'S LABS AT THE POLICE DISPOSAL .. MY SENIOR SCIENCE ADVISOR PERSONALLY SUPERVISED SASHA'S EXAMINATION.
"HE'D DISCOVERED THAT SHE POSSESSED A METAGENE WHICH HAD ENABLED HER TO SURVIVE HER ALIEN ATTACKER...
... BUT SASHA FLED OUR FACILITY SHORTLY THEREAFTER
"SHE STOLE A LEXCORP HELICOPTER... WHICH THEN CRASHED AND BURNED. IT WAS A TERRIBLE TRAGEDY!"
YES, IT WAS. BUT NOT FOR SASHA GREEN
TAKE A LOOK AT THIS..

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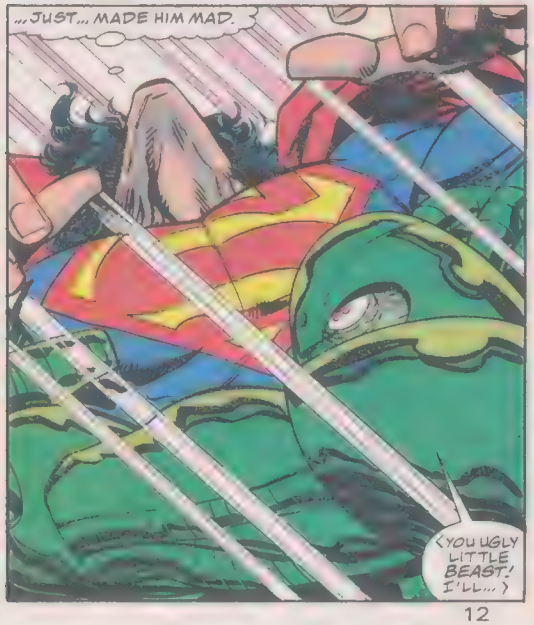
...A CHECK OF DENTAL RECORDS SHOWS THAT THE BODY FOUND IN THE WRECKAGE OF THE HELICOPTER WAS THAT OF A LEXCORP EMPLOYEE NAMED JILLIAN SIMMONS
WHAT'S MORE, AN INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION FOUND THAT SASHA GREEN'S GYM BAG AND KARATE GEAR WERE STILL IN HER LOCKER.
WHAT?! BUT... BUT THE POLICE CHECKED HER LOCKER WEEKS AGO--THEY FOUND NOTHING!
DOESN'T MAKE SENSE, DOES IT? THERE'S NOT MUCH ABOUT THIS CASE THAT DOES ALL I KNOW FOR CERTAIN IS THAT SASHA GREEN IS STILL MISSING--AND I AIM TO FIND HER.
AND I WON'T BE AS EASY AS YOUR STAFF TO CONVINCE SHE SIMPLY MOVED TO COAST CITY.
YOU CAN KEEP THAT FOLDER, LEX. I HAVE A COPY...SO DO THE POLICE.
LOIS, WAIT! I'LL HELP IN ANY WAY I CAN!
YOU MENTIONED AN INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION. WHO...?
YOU'LL FIND OUT ALL ABOUT IT SOON ENOUGH, LEX.
I'M SURE YOU HAVE NO REASON TO WORRY
SLAMM!
HAPPERSEN--!
RIGHT HERE, SIR. I HEARD IT ALL. DO YOU THINK SHE SUSPECTS--?
WHAT SHE SUSPECTS IS BESIDE THE POINT. THAT WOMAN SMELLS A STORY...
...AND SHE WON'T STOP UNTIL SHE GETS IT. WHAT I WANT TO KNOW IS--
--WHY WEREN'T GREEN'S PERSONAL ITEMS DESTROYED?!
I--I DON'T KNOW, SIR. WE BARELY HAD TIME TO MOVE THEM BEFORE THE POLICE CHECKED, AND THEN MY STAFF WAS SO CAUGHT UP IN--!
I DON'T WANT EXCUSES, YOU INCOMPETENT FOOL! I SHOULD THROTTLE YOU THE WAY I DID THAT WITCH SASHA!
Y-YOU WOULDN'T--?
NO... NO, YOU ARE STILL VALUABLE TO ME, SYDNEY...
...FOR NOW.

BUT WE MUST NOT LET MS. LANE FIND SASHA GREEN BEFORE WE DO!
THERE MUST BE NO MORE MISTAKES MADE, SYDNEY ...NONE...
"...OR I WILL BECOME VERY, VERY UNHAPPY!"
<WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?>
<WHO ARE YOU?!>
<ANSWER ME!!!>
WHAT--?!
I LET MYSELF GET SO DISTRACTED BY HOLOGRAMS, I DIDN'T EVEN HEAR THIS BIG SON OF A GUN COMING!
CAN'T UNDERSTAND A WORD HE'S SAYING, BUT HE DOESN'T SOUND HAPPY TO SEE ME.
<YOU HAVE VANDALIZED THE PROTECTIVE SEAL AND TRESPASSED UPON PROPERTIES UNDER MY PROTECTION! YOU WILL SURRENDER AT ONCE!>
LOOK, I DON'T UNDERSTAND--!
<I SAID--SURRENDER!>
HEY...

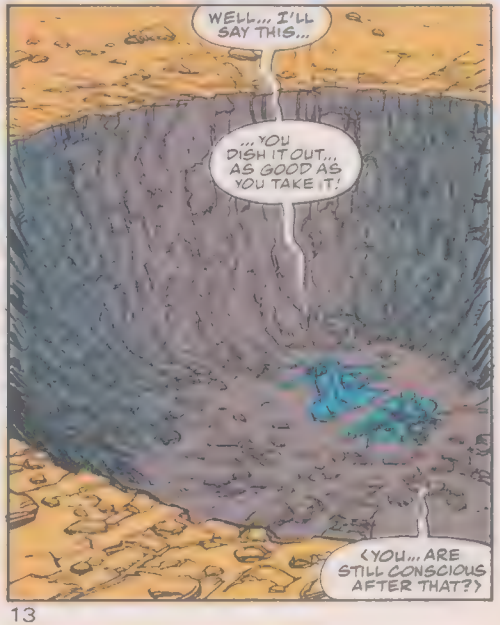
SHTUNNG!
...BACK OFF!
<MY SHIELD--?>
<LITTLE BEAST! I SHALL CRUSH YOU FOR--?>
KATHOOM!
<--THAT.>
<CHAMPION?>
<CHAMPION, WHAT IS HAPPENING?>
<I... HAVE ENCOUNTERED THE INTRUDER, OUTPOST.>
<IT IS AN ALIEN BIPED, SMALLER THAN MYSELF... BUT... WITH SUCH POWER!>
<I CAN'T BELIEVE HE HIT ME THAT HARD!>
I--I DIDN'T MEAN TO HIT HIM SO HARD! I MEANT TO PULL THAT PUNCH.
MY GOD, I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO HE WAS... AND I MIGHT HAVE KILLED HIM!

〈MONSTER!〉
〈HAH!〉
eh?
NO... I DIDN'T KILL HIM...

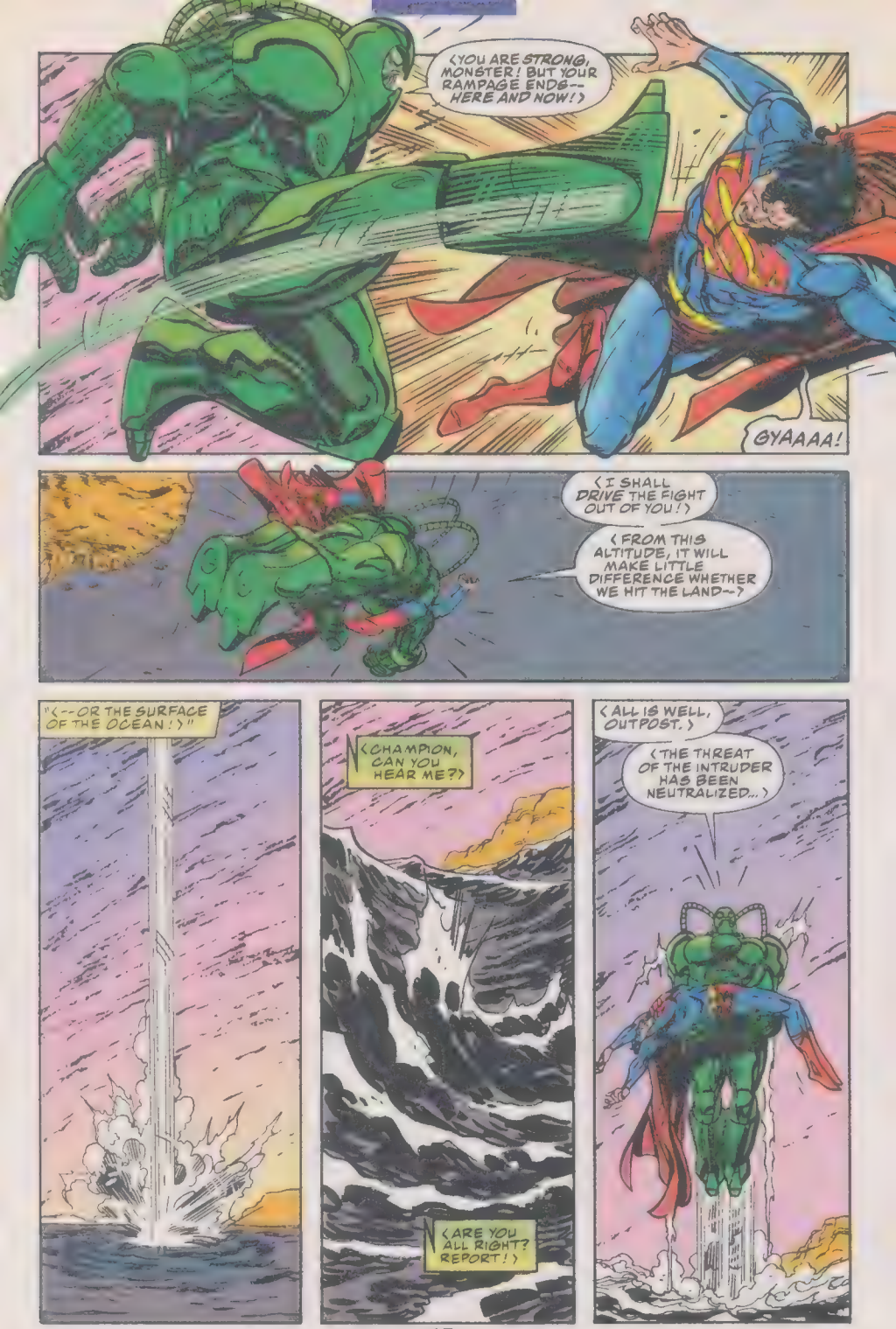

...JUST... MADE HIM MAD.
〈YOU UGLY LITTLE BEAST! I'LL...〉

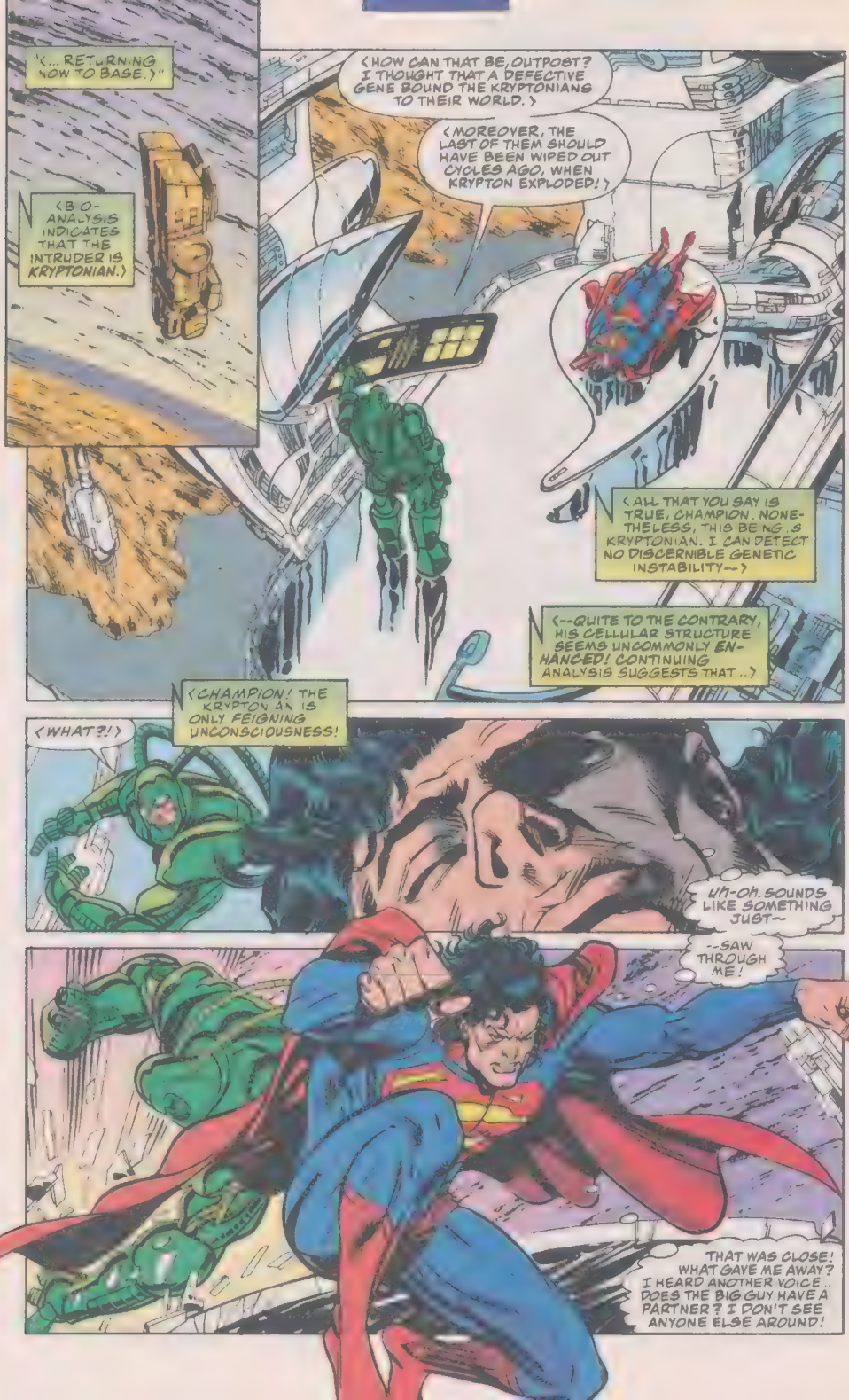
〈NO!!〉
BTOK!

〈LOOK WHAT YOU'VE MADE ME DO!〉
BADOOM!


WELL... I'LL SAY THIS...
...YOU DISH IT OUT... AS GOOD AS YOU TAKE IT!
〈YOU... ARE STILL CONSCIOUS AFTER THAT?〉

〈WHAT MANNER OF CREATURE ARE YOU?〉
LOOK, I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE OR WHAT YOU WANT, BUT I DIDN'T MEAN TO...
〈HE EVADES MY BLOW?! HE IS AS SWIFT AS HE IS STRONG...〉
HEY! I DON'T WANT A FIGHT--!
〈...BUT I, TOO, AM SWIFT!〉
〈YOU ARE MY PRISONER NOW, CREATURE!〉
uunghh! WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO MAKE YOU UNDERSTAND?!
〈I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU CAME FROM, BUT I WILL NOT ALLOW ANY FURTHER DESTRUCTION.〉
MAYBE HE DOESN'T WANT TO UNDERSTAND.
FROM WHAT I'VE SEEN, HE'S AS BRUTAL AS THE ALIEN MURDERER WHO KILLED AURON.*
*IN ADVENTURES #509.
OF COURSE, HE MAY HAVE GOTTEN THE SAME IMPRESSION FROM ME!
WHY IS HE HEADING INTO SPACE? IS HE JUST TRYING TO GET US AWAY FROM THE CITY, OR DOES HE WANT TO SUFFOCATE ME?
WELL, ONE THING'S FOR CERTAIN--
--WE'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE IN A VACUUM!
?!?
〈NO ONE HAS EVER BEFORE BROKEN MY GRIP!〉


〈YOU ARE STRONG, MONSTER! BUT YOUR RAMPAGE ENDS-- HERE AND NOW!〉
GYAAAA!
〈I SHALL DRIVE THE FIGHT OUT OF YOU!〉
〈FROM THIS ALTITUDE, IT WILL MAKE LITTLE DIFFERENCE WHETHER WE HIT THE LAND--〉
"〈--OR THE SURFACE OF THE OCEAN!〉"
〈CHAMPION, CAN YOU HEAR ME?〉
〈ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? REPORT!〉
〈ALL IS WELL, OUTPOST.〉
〈THE THREAT OF THE INTRUDER HAS BEEN NEUTRALIZED...〉


"(...RETURNING NOW TO BASE.)"
(BIO-ANALYSIS INDICATES THAT THE INTRUDER IS KRYPTONIAN.)
(HOW CAN THAT BE, OUTPOST? I THOUGHT THAT A DEFECTIVE GENE BOUND THE KRYPTONIANS TO THEIR WORLD.)
(MOREOVER, THE LAST OF THEM SHOULD HAVE BEEN WIPED OUT CYCLES AGO, WHEN KRYPTON EXPLODED!)
(ALL THAT YOU SAY IS TRUE, CHAMPION. NONETHELESS, THIS BEING IS KRYPTONIAN. I CAN DETECT NO DISCERNIBLE GENETIC INSTABILITY--)
(--QUITE TO THE CONTRARY, HIS CELLULAR STRUCTURE SEEMS UNCOMMONLY ENHANCED! CONTINUING ANALYSIS SUGGESTS THAT..)
(CHAMPION! THE KRYPTONIAN IS ONLY FEIGNING UNCONSCIOUSNESS!
(WHAT?!)
UH-OH. SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING JUST--
--SAW THROUGH ME!
THAT WAS CLOSE! WHAT GAVE ME AWAY? I HEARD ANOTHER VOICE.. DOES THE BIG GUY HAVE A PARTNER? I DON'T SEE ANYONE ELSE AROUND!

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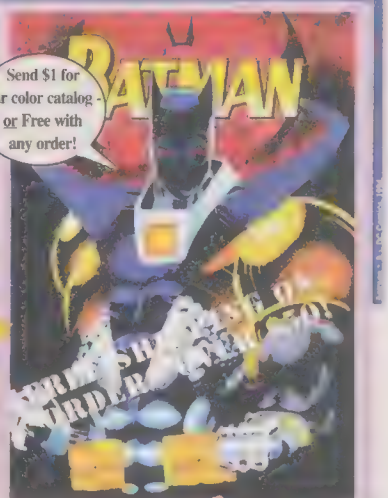

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NICE PLACE YOU HAVE HERE!
LET'S NOT WRECK ANY MORE OF IT THAN WE HAVE TO!
WOKK!
GUUUH!
SORRY IT HAS TO BE THIS WAY-- BUT YOU DID MAKE THE FIRST THREATENING MOVE!
NOW, WHAT AM I GOING TO DO WITH YOU?
〈DO... YOUR WORST... MONSTER!〉
〈I SHALL NEVER SURRENDER! NEVER! I SHALL STOP YOU... IF IT'S THE LAST THING... I DO!〉
〈NO!〉
ZAK!
〈O-OUTPOST ... WHY...?〉
HE'S OUT COLD. WAS THAT BLAST MEANT FOR ME? I DON'T SEE ANYTHING BEHIND THOSE WALLS BUT... MILES OF CIRCUITS!
WHAT'S GOING ON?
ΔO NOT FEAR KRYPTONIAN. YOU °ØΔ NOTHING TO FEAR IN THIS OUTPOST

◊° WHO AM I SPEAKING TO? WHERE ARE YOU? AND HOW IS IT THAT YOU UNDERSTAND KRYPTONESE? ¬Δ
Δ° BE AT EASE. I AM OUTPOST... YOU WOULD CALL ME AN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ⌐◊/
∇Φ I FIRST INTERCEPTED AND DECIPHERED KRYPTONESE TRANSMISSIONS 2 5 CENTURIES AGO. AS FOR MY LOCATION...
... I AM ALL AROUND YOU. THERE... I SPEAK NOW IN YOUR OTHER TONGUE YOU CALL IT... ENGLISH?
YES... BUT HOW COULD YOU KNOW THAT?
THOUGHT IS ELECTROMAGNETIC IN NATURE. IN CLOSE PROXIMITY, I CAN RECEIVE CERTAIN IMPRESSIONS. YOU HAVE MANY QUESTIONS ... I SHALL ENDEAVOR TO ANSWER THEM.
THE ONE WHOM YO.. FOUGHT IS THE CHAMPION... THAT IS BOTH HIS NAME AND THE ROLE WHICH BEFELL HIM
I CANNOT REVEAL HOW HE CAME BY HIS GREAT POWER. BUT KNOW YOU THAT HE USED IT WELL IN THE SERVICE OF THE PLANET WHICH WE ORBIT.
MANY YEARS AGO, ALIEN INVADERS SOUGHT TO SUBJUGATE OUR WORLD.
WHEN OUR DEFENSES WERE OVERWHELMED, CHAMPION PUT AN END TO THE INVASION
BUT THE INVADERS HAD THEIR REVENGE
IN A FINAL, SACRIFICIAL MOVE THEY DEFLECTED A MASSIVE ASTEROID AND SENT IT HURTLING TOWARD THE BIRTHWORLD
NOT EVEN THE CHAMPION COULD STOP THE ASTEROID
MILLIONS WERE KILLED BY THE INITIAL IMPACT... BILLIONS MORE IN THE GLOBAL CATACLYSMS WHICH FOLLOWED
THE PLANET WAS SHAKEN BY EARTHQUAKES... ITS COASTAL AREAS POUNDED BY DEVASTATING WAVES. FIRE SWEPT THE LAND AND ASH FILLED THE AIR

IN DESPERATION, THE SURVIVORS CONSTRUCTED A SERIES OF VAST UNDERGROUND CHAMBERS AND PLACED THEMSELVES IN SUSPENDED ANIMATION
THERE, THEY STILL SLUMBER, WAITING FOR THE DAY WHEN BIRTHWORLD IS AGAIN INHABITABLE.
ONLY CHAMPION REMAINED ACTIVE
WITH MY AID, HE BEGAN THE DECADES-LONG RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CITIES--SEALING THE BUILDINGS FROM THE ELEMENTS AND PREPARING THE WORLD FOR THE DAY WHEN ITS PEOPLE WOULD AGAIN LIVE.
FOR ALL THOSE YEARS, HE HAS RESIDED HERE WITHIN ME... EVER ON GUARD AGAINST THREATS TO THE PLANET... EVER THE CHAMPION
HE LOOKS AFTER BIRTHWORLD. AND I LOOK AFTER HIM.
THEN WHY DID YOU KNOCK HIM OUT?
CHAMPION HAS NOT BEEN HARMED... UNDER MY INFLUENCE HE DOES BUT SLEEP. HE WAS BEYOND LISTENING. HAD I NOT STOPPED HIM, HE WOULD HAVE FOUGHT UNTIL ONE OR THE BOTH OF YOU PERISHED
CHAMPION CARES VERY MUCH ABOUT OUR PLANET... TOO MUCH AT TIMES.
I CAN FEEL FOR THAT. I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO HAVE A WORLD RELYING ON YOU.
I LEFT ONE... A LONG WAYS AWAY. EVERYONE I'VE EVER CARED FOR IS THERE.
YOU REFER TO THE THIRD PLANET OF A MINOR YELLOW STAR ON THE GALACTIC RIM
EARTH! YES, THAT'S IT! WHAT ELSE HAVE YOU READ IN MY MIND?
ENOUGH TO CROSS-REFERENCE AVAILABLE STAR CHARTS THIS "EARTH" OF YOURS IS MANY LIGHT YEARS AWAY--
--BUT ITS STAR SYSTEM CAN BE REACHED THROUGH A HYPERSPATIAL WORMHOLE. NOT TOO DISTANT. I HAVE PLOTTED A COURSE WHICH WILL TAKE YOU THERE.

BUT YOU MUST NOT TARRY. THE WORMHOLE IS A CYCLICAL ANOMALY... IT WILL REMAIN OPEN BUT A SHORT TIME. YOU MUST MEMORIZE THE COORDINATES--!
I HAVE THEM, OUTPOST. BUT... AFTER ALL THIS... WHY ARE YOU HELPING ME?
YOU MEANT NO ILL TO THE BIRTH-WORLD. THERE CAN BE NO HARM IN THE SHARING OF THIS KNOWLEDGE.
WHAT ABOUT CHAMPION? I HATE TO JUST LEAVE HIM LIKE THIS.
CHAMPION SUFFERS NO LASTING PHYSICAL TRAUMAS. DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELF WITH HIM... I SHALL EXPLAIN ALL TO HIM WHEN HE AWAKENS.
YOU'RE SURE--?
IT IS MY LOT TO WATCH OVER THE CHAMPION AND AID HIM IN FULFILLING HIS DESTINY. THAT DESTINY IS LINKED TO THE BIRTH-WORLD... EVEN AS YOURS IS TO EARTH.
I REPEAT... YOU MUST NOT TARRY!
ALL RIGHT, THEN...
...REST WELL, CHAMPION. YOURS ISN'T AN EASY JOB--
--I KNOW. GOOD-BYE, OUTPOST,! AND THANKS!
FAREWELL..., SUPERMAN. MAY YOUR JOURNEY BE SAFE AND SWIFT...
<...AND MAY DESTINY KEEP YOU AWAY FROM THIS ARC OF THE GALAXY.>
<I FEAR THAT THE POWER GROWING WITHIN YOU CANNOT LONG BE HELD IN CHECK. IT IS BEST THAT YOU BE FAR FROM BIRTH-WORLD'S ORBIT...>
20

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Lightning Strikes Again!

THE POWER OF SHAZAM!

January 1994

Fully Painted Illustrations by Jerry Ordway

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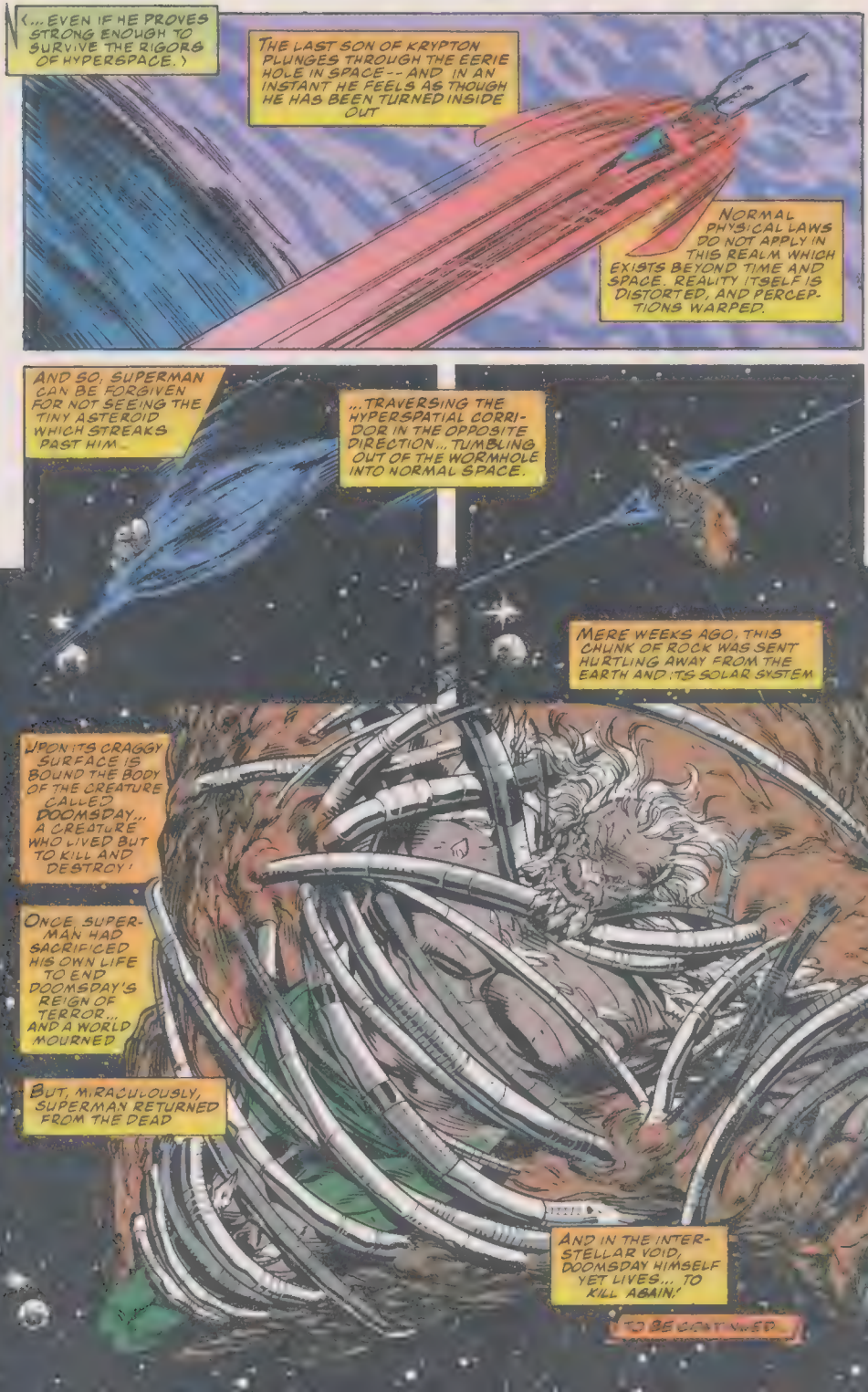
〈...WHEN THE CHAMPION AWAKES.〉
〈HM... OUTPOST? WHERE IS THE KRYPTONIAN?〉
〈WHY DID YOU RENDER ME UNCONSCIOUS?!〉
〈IT WAS THE SWIFTEST MANNER OF ENDING THE CONFLICT, CHAMPION. THE KRYPTONIAN WISHED NO HARM TO BIRTHWORLD OR HER PEOPLE.〉
〈THE DAMAGES INCURRED WERE UNINTENTIONAL.〉
〈YOU ARE CERTAIN OF THAT? HIS POWER WAS GREATER THAN ANY I HAVE EVER ENCOUNTERED.〉
〈DO NOT FEAR, CHAMPION.〉
〈THE KRYPTONIAN'S POWER MAY HAVE PRESENTED A DANGER, BUT HE IS NO LONGER A THREAT TO BIRTHWORLD OR TO US--〉
〈--I HAVE SENT HIM ON HIS WAY. AND I REGRET THE NECESSITY OF THAT. I SENSED A GREAT NOBILITY WITHIN HIM, CHAMPION...〉
〈...HE'S DEEPLY DEVOTED TO HIS ADOPTED PLANET, EVEN AS YOU ARE TO THE BIRTHWORLD. UNDER OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES, YOU TWO COULD HAVE BEEN ALLIES.〉
〈AS IT IS, I DOUBT THAT WE SHALL EVER SEE HIS LIKE AGAIN...〉


(... EVEN IF HE PROVES STRONG ENOUGH TO SURVIVE THE RIGORS OF HYPERSPACE.)
THE LAST SON OF KRYPTON PLUNGES THROUGH THE EERIE HOLE IN SPACE -- AND IN AN INSTANT HE FEELS AS THOUGH HE HAS BEEN TURNED INSIDE OUT
NORMAL PHYSICAL LAWS DO NOT APPLY IN THIS REALM WHICH EXISTS BEYOND TIME AND SPACE. REALITY ITSELF IS DISTORTED, AND PERCEPTIONS WARPED.
AND SO, SUPERMAN CAN BE FORGIVEN FOR NOT SEEING THE TINY ASTEROID WHICH STREAKS PAST HIM...
...TRAVERSING THE HYPERSPATIAL CORRIDOR IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION... TUMBLING OUT OF THE WORMHOLE INTO NORMAL SPACE.
MERE WEEKS AGO, THIS CHUNK OF ROCK WAS SENT HURTLING AWAY FROM THE EARTH AND ITS SOLAR SYSTEM
UPON ITS CRAGGY SURFACE IS BOUND THE BODY OF THE CREATURE CALLED DOOMSDAY... A CREATURE WHO LIVED BUT TO KILL AND DESTROY!
ONCE, SUPERMAN HAD SACRIFICED HIS OWN LIFE TO END DOOMSDAY'S REIGN OF TERROR... AND A WORLD MOURNED
BUT, MIRACULOUSLY, SUPERMAN RETURNED FROM THE DEAD
AND IN THE INTERSTELLAR VOID, DOOMSDAY HIMSELF YET LIVES... TO KILL AGAIN!
TO BE CONTINUED

RE:ACTION

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Dear DC:

ACTION COMICS #692 was an extremely important issue. It featured the most significant resurrection since ADVENTURES #500—that being the return of Clark Kent. No matter what anybody says, Superman isn't the real thing without his alter ego, star reporter Clark Kent. Kal-El is a strange visitor from another world; Clark is a man and part of *this* world; and Superman is the result of the two. Clark is so integral to Superman that it is only now that Superman is truly alive again. This issue is really the final chapter in the Doomsday saga.

Matrix, or Supergirl, as she's now called, was an obvious method of bringing Clark Kent and Superman face to face in public, as she did once before during her identity crisis. This sleight of hand should once and for all prevent the secret-identity-almost-discovered plot from being a part of future stories.

One other thing that won't be seen again is Superman rising from the dead. The Eradicator has made it clear that it was a one-off, and now Dr. Occult has stressed it again. Next time Superman fights Doomsday he'll have to defeat him and survive the encounter. Speaking of Dr. Occult, he was a totally unexpected guest in this issue. From Superman's reaction, it must have been a traumatic earlier encounter between the two. Please don't wait too long before sharing that story with us.

Anyway, I look forward to the future of these books now that the hero is fully restored. Superman and Clark Kent are alive! Let the never-ending battle continue!

Paul N. Hicks
Cammery, N.S.W., Australia

*****

Editors:

Re: ACTION #692

Dr. John H. Watson, M.D., was one of literature's most diabolical practical jokers. He would often mention some fascinating case that he and Sherlock Holmes had been involved in (such as "the case of the Giant Rat of Sumatra") but then never tell the story for some lame reason (such as "the world is not yet prepared"). In this issue you seem to be trying to imitate him.

The world had better be prepared to hear the story of the first pairing of Superman and Dr. Occult because I am reminding you right now to tell the story of the first meeting of these two Siegel and Shuster creations. If you don't—well, you'll have one frustrated Superman fan on your hands, and you don't want that, do you?

Randall McGee
San Jose, CA

Randall and Paul, you're in good company in your driving need to know about Superman's first run-in with the trenchcoated Dr. Occult. You and almost every other reader who commented on ACTION #692 took the opportunity to "remind us about it some time" just as our caption asked you to. So...thanks for the reminder! Seriously, the guaranteed-juicy untold story of Superman's first supernatural adventure—as well as other "untolds," like what happened writing his second novel, Under a Yellow Sun*—will be revealed in due time. Maybe when things slow down a little in Metropolis—yeah, right!*

*****

Dear Super-Team:

He is back! Clark Kent is back. Thank you, thank you, I really thought this was too much to hope for. When you announced you were going to kill Superman, I was sure you'd bring him back, but not, I feared, without really changing him. I thought you wanted to make him more like most other superheroes. I thought you wanted to give him a flashy new costume instead of the super-classic one that's been around since the Golden Age, and I thought you wanted to get rid of Clark Kent. Super-heroes of today don't have secret identities, not really, because they don't really try to be a part of the normal world. I had resigned myself to the probable "death" of Clark Kent, but now that he has been brought back, I truly feel how vital this human part of Superman is. Thanks to Clark, Superman is somebody who's got a nine-to-five job like most of us, and he's got Earth parents and a fiancée whom he loves. This is terribly important. He is one of us and much, much more than us at the same time. Without his human side, Superman would be just another costume, lost somewhere in the stratosphere. I'm eternally grateful to John Byrne for bringing back Ma and Pa Kent, and I'm even more grateful to you for getting Lois and Clark engaged. Don't ever get Superman seriously involved with someone like Maxima, or even someone like Wonder Woman or Lori Lemaris, who aren't plain old human beings like us. And now, after Clark's wonderful reunion with his parents, I have only one more thing to ask for. ACTION #700 is coming up, and—listen, are those wedding bells I hear in the distance?

Ann Sidbrant
Roskildev, Sweden

Sorry you were distracted by those mysterious wedding bells before you could finish your request, Ann. Besides, wedding bells in Sweden are pretty far away *from Metropolis...'cause we don't hear 'em...yet.*

*****

Dear DC:

ACTION #692 was a well-done issue. The solution for Clark's return was very unexpected, and quite clever. It was nice to see a happy ending in this comic for once. This is the reunion we've waited months for. Finally, whoever thought up the clever title—"And Who, Disguised as Clark Kent?"—should be given a raise or something—nice tribute to the old *Adventures of Superman* TV show.

I'm not quite so pleased, however, with the results of Superman's resurrection. I know that many readers expected Superman to come back with a new costume, or new powers, or something new. After all that's happened, all Superman has is a new hairstyle (which I hope he keeps). What was the point of his death, other than to make money for DC? I mean no offense, but having Superman completely unchanged after the past ten months of stories seems ridiculous, not to mention pointless.

Ben Herman
Scarsdale, NY

Well, there's no pleasing everyone, Ben. And as you can see from Ann's letter above, some readers were fearing the exact things you craved—new powers, new costume, etc. But is Superman really unchanged? No one returns from a near-death experience unaltered, and as current SUPERMAN titles show, Clark Kent is no exception.

*****

Dear Re: Action:

This is not your father's Superman. I like the change; he actually seems human! He and Lois joke and play, he doesn't have an instant plan for every situation (30 years ago, he would have had a "robot double" for the Clark contingency—I half expected to see that here), and it looks like he'll have some trouble in his everyday life besides superfights and his secret

identity. It's really cool to see Supes showing more of a personality, as opposed to the high, noble hero I remember from when I was little. One thing confuses me, though: I'd always heard that when people are brought back from the dead they lose their souls. Here it seems to have worked in reverse.

Lara Hoffman
Milford, OH

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Dear Mike:

Re: Cover of ACTION #692

What can I say? This is simply one of the best covers that I have seen in quite a while. What makes it so wonderful is that it is a nostalgic look at Clark Kent changing into Superman. Growing up, this is how I always envisioned Superman, sans the long hair. Here we have a mild-mannered reporter who at a moment's notice can change into the greatest superhero alive.

The cover, like a good book, draws you inside so that Clark Kent/Superman seems to be only an arm's length away. Being only a few feet away, Superman stands just as I have always seen him, a larger-than-life figure who stands above the crowd. The new, upgraded color process allows the red, blue, and yellow of Superman's costume to stand out better. The big S bursts out from the cover like a beacon, letting everyone know that Superman is coming, much like the way the Bat-signal lets the people of Gotham know that Batman is on his way. Through Clark's classic black-rimmed glasses, Superman's faraway look reveals that although he might be a few feet away, he is already miles away fighting the never-ending battle.

Congratulations to all the people involved in bringing Superman to life week after week, but special compliments go to Ed Hannigan, Kerry Gammill, Jackson Guice, and Denis Rodier for a wonderful cover. The SUPERMAN titles have never looked better!

N. Lindgren
Redmond, WA

Actually, N., ACTION #692's cover was the debut effort of Suzanne Bourdages, Denis Rodier's assistant, on the colors. Just a little correction in the "Credit-Where-Credit-Is-Due Department."

*****

Dear ACTION COMICS:

Issue #692 was absolutely wonderful. No, there weren't any thrilling action sequences or any death-defying escapes, but this issue was the one that had it all. We get a very credible solution for the reappearance of Clark Kent and a concrete explanation of Superman's resurrection. Things are once again in place for many more years of excitement with the Man of Steel. It is indeed good to have him back (although please cut that hair!).

But the best thing about #692 had nothing to do with Superman. What impressed me the most was Roger Stern's portrayal (albeit a brief one) of my all-time favorite hero, Captain Marvel. This was, with the exception of ACTION #690 (thanks again, Roger), the only time in recent years that Cap hasn't been written as an intellectually juvenile twerp. I hope that other writers give him the respect he deserves. He is one of the oldest and richest characters in the annals of comics history. It's a pity that most writers seem to treat him as a joke ("Captain Whitebread," etc.). It certainly would be great to see Captain Marvel in his own monthly title. Alas...

Bill Edmunds
Conway, NH

*****

Alas? Alas nothing! Although the regular Captain Marvel series is a ways down the road of 1994...this very month witnesses the arrival of the POWER OF SHAZAM hardcover graphic novel, drawn and written by SUPERMAN veteran Jerry Ordway. Sounds like it's tailor-made for you! Thanks for giving this new assistant editor a crack at his first shameless plug, Rick.

*****

Dear Super Folks:

In the 33 years that I have been reading comics (I'm 41 now), nothing has provided me with more sustained, continuous entertainment than the recent story arcs. "Doomsday," "Funeral for a Friend," and "Reign of the Supermen" sent me on an emotional roller coaster. I felt for each and every character—Lois's shock and pain, Bibbo's simple nobility, even the Superman cultists fighting over who was the true "god."

Nothing, however, caused me greater anguish than watching the Kents deal with the loss of their son. No parent should ever have to bury a child. It is an unspeakable nightmare, a dread that you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy. Your books brilliantly depicted, in both words and pictures, how a horror such as this would feel.

That is why I was so moved by the last panel of "And Who, Disguised as Clark Kent?" The sheer joy depicted in that single reunion panel brought tears to my eyes. It made me realize once again how important families are, how important mine is to me.

I showed both of my children, ages 8 and 5, issue #692 of ACTION. My daughter (the older one) knew that Superman had died and come back to life, but she never knew that Clark had parents. She asked to read the comic, which we did together.

When we were finished, I told Melissa that one day she will grow up and have a life of her own. But whether she lived across the street or across the country, her mother and I would always be there for her to talk to, always be there to share her joys and problems. I ended our chat by saying that I could only hope that when she grows up, she'll feel about us the way that Clark feels about Jonathan and Martha. Then we hugged and I put her to sleep.

Comics aren't for children anymore. They are grittier, darker than when I was a kid. But every now and then a story comes along that almost demands that it be told to a child. Such was the case with this issue of ACTION. Thank you for a wonderful issue.

Mitch Karlick
Herndon, VA

For reminding us that comics can still be for kids, Mitch, your entire family has been awarded a shiny new Baldy award!

—Chris Duffy
New guy

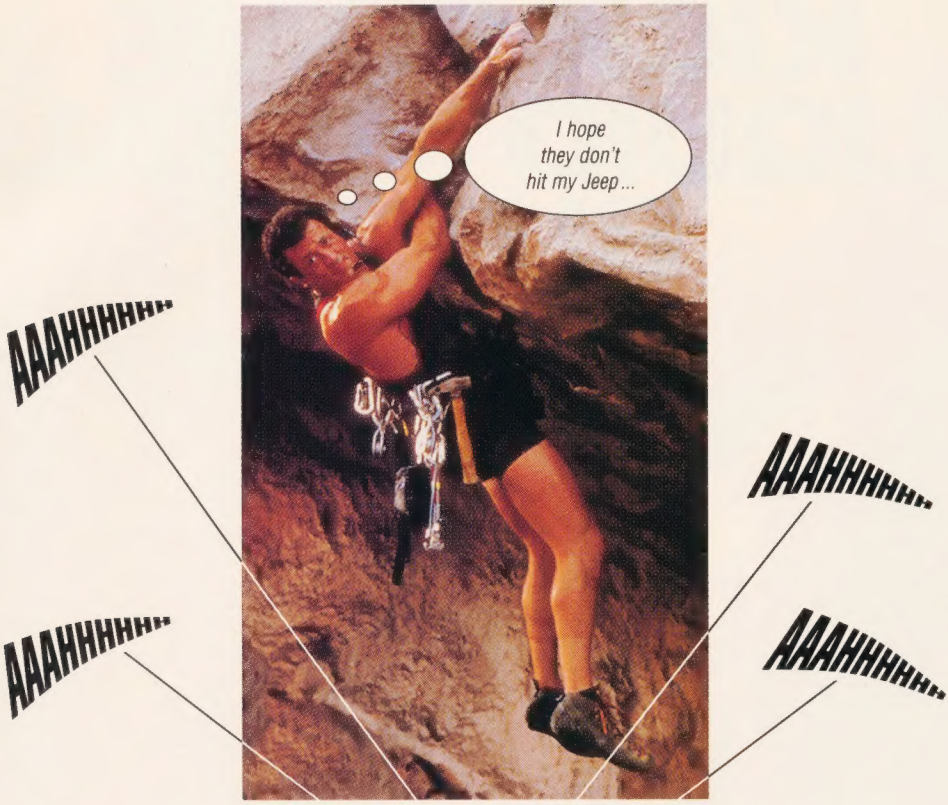
NEXT WEEK: Superman needs to get back to Earth—or else! The denizens of the Underworld have made their first move! And Project Cadmus is the target! Can the Last Son of Krypton get back to Earth in time to make a difference? Louise Simonson writes and M.D. Bright (GREEN LANTERN #46) and Dennis Janke draw MAN OF STEEL #31 on sale in just seven little ones.

IN TWO WEEKS: The five-part "Bizarro's World" begins as Lex Luthor attempts to save his sorry butt from oblivion! Returning to his earlier notes, Luthor recreates his first cloning experiment to defeat Superman—bringing Superman's imperfect duplicate back to life! Dan Jurgens writes, and Stuart Immonen and Josef Rubinstein bring the Bizarro Superman into the nineties in fourteen days!

IN THREE WEEKS: Lois Lane is missing, and the prime suspect is the Bizarro Superman! Also, the rest of Metropolis's clones aren't looking so good either...Be here when Karl Kesel, Barry Kitson and Ray McCarthy bring forth ADVENTURE COMICS #510!

NEXT MONTH: Lex Luthor's totally lost it—his hair, that is! Besides, you should be here for "Bizarro's World" part three, when Superman meets Bizarro head on! Roger Stern, Jackson Guice and Denis Rodier do their best in one month!

This month's cover was designed by Ed Hannigan, pencilled and inked by Jackson Guice, and colored by Suzanne Bourdages! Spacey!



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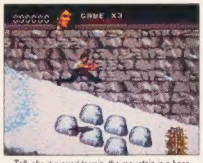

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PREVENT JUDGMENT DAY

I NEED YOUR MOTORCYCLE

PROTECT JOHN CONNOR

OBJECTIVE: RESCUE SARAH CONNOR

DESTROY CYBERDYNE RESEARCH

HASTA LA VISTA, BABY!

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